

Sara Backer/College Writing 1/2013/Common Text Assignment

### **Essay #1: Literacy Reflection**

15% of course grade

Electronic copy due on Turnitin.com by Wednesday, Sep. 25 at 11:59 p.m.

Print copy due Thursday, Sep. 26 in my office mail box before class starts.

Word count: about 1,000 words

Format: explained on the course web site

#### ***What is a literacy reflection?***

Your Norton text defines a reflective essay as an “attempt to think something through by writing about it and to share our thinking with others” (214). A literacy reflection in particular ponders an experience about reading or writing. As we have discussed, the pictorial history of U Mass Lowell shows us the interaction of several generations of people with one place and invites us to speculate on the nature of that ever-changing interaction. For this essay, I invite you to reflect upon the literacy legacy of the inscriptions on benches on North and South campus. Some prompts for your field notes: What are they? Where are they positioned and why? Who chose them? What might this say about the place, time, and people involved? Does one speak to you more than the others? If you were to commemorate a bench for future students, what quote might you choose and why? Overall, what do the quotes say about this university?

#### ***What is the point of this assignment?***

This assignment is designed to improve your abilities to:

- ★ write a reflection based on observation (as opposed to personal life experiences)
- ★ clearly describe places and things with precise vocabulary
- ★ write to be understood by smart and curious strangers who are ignorant about U Mass Lowell
- ★ build substantial content from observation
- ★ think critically about the concepts of heritage, use of space and place, and public universities

#### ***How do I write this?***

First, check the preparation you have already done:

- Read Norton 214-221 “Reflections” paying particular attention to “Key Features” (217) and “Ways of Organizing a Reflective Essay” (220-221)
- Read Norton 45 “Describing the Setting” and reviewed class notes about vivid detail
- Written your “Field Notes” homework part 1 and 2
- Written your freewriting exercise on speculation about purpose
- Visited the course web site for formatting instructions and due dates and times

How you write a draft is a personal matter. If you have a process you love, use it. If you tend to be unhappy with your process, try this one (and tell me how it works out for you):

- Before you start to write sentences, go over all your notes and determine your focus. This should be the most sophisticated and interesting idea you have to tell your readers. Often, this will serve as your conclusion.

- Draft your paragraphs. Don't worry about sentence structure at this point; just keep putting words on paper until you have covered all the material that is relevant to your focus.
- Organize your paragraphs from simplest to most complex ideas. For example, you may start by describing a bench and/or the campus and end with a statement about the implications of a particular bench message at a public university setting.
- Revise your sentences to be detailed and clear with perfect grammar and punctuation.
- Invent a title for your essay that includes one or more of the following:
  - an unusual word or combination of words,
  - a pun, rhyme, or alliteration,
  - part of a quote.
- Take a break. Go work out, shower, sleep, eat--something unrelated to writing and studying. This step is mandatory. The longer the break, the better you'll be able to take a fresh look at your essay and find things you can easily improve.
- Proofread! Remember to proofread your formatting as well as your essay.
- Congratulate yourself for finishing your essay, and give yourself some kind of reward. Extra credit is possible if you share your congratulations and rewards with a classmate (see me for details).

***How can I assess my writing of this essay? How will you assess and grade it?***

In addition to the universal grading rubric posted on the course web site, my evaluation of your literacy reflection will focus on the criteria on the next page. Print the rubric and staple it in as the last page of your essay. (Do NOT include it in your electronic version sent to Turnitin and do NOT include it in your word count.)

Leave the form blank for me to fill out with my comments and suggestions except for #5, which gives you the option of requesting my feedback on one specific thing you have worked hard to achieve in this essay (for example, *consistent tone* or *avoiding run-on sentences*). However, do read the evaluation rubric before you submit your essay because knowing what I will be looking for could help you make productive changes.

I look forward to reading your reflections!

### Your Objectives/My Evaluation

In addition to the universal grading rubric (linked on the web site), my assessment of your literacy reflection will focus on these criteria. Print this sheet and staple it in as the last page of your essay. Optional: you may also print and include the universal grading rubric.

1. *Depth and complexity of thought and speculation*

Demonstrate your ability to look beyond the obvious and come up with ideas no one else in class is likely to have. Show me the highest level of your intelligence at work.

- \_\_\_\_\_ +

2. *Level of detail*

Convey a precise impression through the use of concrete details.

- \_\_\_\_\_ +

3. *Appropriate organization*

Move from your simplest to most complicated ideas, binding similar ideas in paragraphs, and ending with the implications of your reflection. See Norton 220-221.

- \_\_\_\_\_ +

4. *Impact of first and last sentences and title*

Take advantage of the power positions of rhetoric.

- \_\_\_\_\_ +

5. *Request for additional feedback:* \_\_\_\_\_